



The Virginia Saltwater Review

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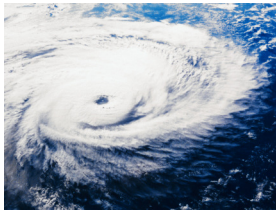
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by

Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division

OVERVIEW

September. When our fisheries patterns transition from those summer hotspots to the fall mass gatherings before the big push out of the rivers, and for some fish, the bay. Some large spot have started to group up, puppy (red) drum are in abundance, and of course, there are many questions about the regulations for the fall striped bass season in the Chesapeake Bay. Currently, many of our reporting stations, readers, and editors are looking south, as a trio of big storms is lined up to steal the headlines over the next week or more - Hanna, Ike, and Josephine. And, if you want to see a big fish (picture on page 2), our deep water (deep dropping) fishery offshore continues to produce records, as another snowy grouper mark fell this past August.



Tropical storm Hanna (or maybe Hurricane Hanna) continues to head our way, as we are under a Tropical Storm Warning. The forecast for the weekend calls for a very fast deterioration of weather conditions, with current predictions for seas up to, or greater than, 7 feet for the lower Chesapeake Bay by Saturday afternoon and evening, sustained winds of 50 mph, and 2-5 inches of rain. This not a compact storm, with tropical storm winds extending across an area 300 miles wide or more. And of course, where are Ike and Josephine going to end up? We wish all of our reporting stations and readers the best during the upcoming days of uncertain weather conditions.



In preparation for the storm, VMRC's Marine Sportfish Collection Project will not be in operation during the upcoming weekend. The project freezers are either being relocated to a state storage facility, or our project partners are securing the freezers so that there is minimal risk of flooding or wind damage. We wish to thank all of our project partners for their helpfulness and assistance during the last 24-hours: Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton), Bell Isle Marina (Hampton), Long Bay Pointe Marina (Va. Beach), Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville), and Wachapreague Marina. We also would like to note that we no longer have a collection freezer located at the Morningstar Marina at Gwynn's Island (formerly known as the Boatel), and we want to thank the staff for working with us this past summer.



The 2008 recreational striped bass fishery for the Chesapeake Bay Fall season will reopen October 4, 2008. The minimum size limit will be 18 inches and the maximum size limit 28 inches, with a possession limit of 2 striped bass per person. Also, recreational anglers may possess one fish, of the two fish possession limit, that is 34 inches or greater in length. The Marine Resources Commission has scheduled a public hearing in late

October to decide whether there should be any changes to the December 10 - 31 recreational striped bass fishing regulations. Currently, a 1-striped bass possession limit is scheduled to be in effect, from December 10 - 31, and that fish shall not be a size that is between 28 and 34 inches total length, as in 2007.



Ok, we've mentioned a very popular (big) fishery, striped bass, and a big storm, Hanna. Now, let's finish with a BIG fish. Jere Humphrey of Norfolk, Virginia has established a new state record for snowy grouper with a 68-pound fish caught August 17, 2008. The record-setting grouper bested the existing state record, set by Chris Boyce of Hampton, Virginia on December 9, 2007, by two full pounds. Humphrey caught his grouper "deep-dropping" near the Norfolk Canyon in over 50 fathoms of water while fishing aboard the private boat Bone Daddy, skippered by James

Collier. The fish had a length of 46.5 inches and a girth of 37 inches. The record fish was caught on a custom made rod, mated with a Penn 340 GTI reel and spooled with 80-pound test braided line. The record-setting grouper hit a simple bottom rig baited with Boston mackerel.

And now, this weeks fishing reports:

Chincoteague

Donna at Captain Bob's is seeing slow action on the inside, due to winds that will keep increasing as tropical systems plague the Atlantic coast. Flounder, baby black sea bass, and some croaker are being caught by anglers braving the winds. Chris Whiteman landed a 19.5-inch flounder at Marker Red 20 using silversides. Large

flounder are being caught on the seaside, outside the inlet at the wrecks, as well as in the Assateague Channel. Mel Cosner of Chincoteague reeled in a 26.75-inch, 9.8-pound flounder using finger mullet at the Blackfish Banks. Offshore, black sea bass are biting, but the dolphin action is hot. Jimmy McDonnell landed a 47-pound dolphin using ballyhoo. Jimmy also brought in a 57.5-inch wahoo. Captain Glen has gone out and had luck with flounder, landing a 7-pound, 6-ounce fish. The Captain also has had catches of dolphin, jacks, false albacore, and skipjack tuna. Anglers are having luck with nice size catches of spadefish in the wrecks.

Wachapreague

The staff at Wachapreague Marina is seeing some great white marlin catches, especially in the Norfolk Canyon. Up to twenty catches a day have been seen throughout the week. Croaker fishing is also picking up, with catches ranging from 15 to 19 inches. A few spot and trout are showing up, as well as flounder. Dolphin continues to bring in some good catches, most near citation size.

At Captain Zeds, the week has been slow with area schools starting back up. Flounder and croaker are still biting, with the flounder hanging out at Paramore Island and the croaker at the Green Channel. Offshore, the tuna action has slowed down, but anglers continue to bring in good catches of dolphin and white marlin.

Cape Charles

Staff from Chris' Bait and Tackle are seeing an increase in the speckled trout population on the seaside and bayside, but a decrease in the croaker action. Flounder catches are picking up off Cape Charles, 4-Island, and the High Rise Bridge. Red drum are continuing to bite at Smith and Fisherman's Islands, as well as buoys 36 and 38.

Cherrystone Bait and Tackle has seen very little action over the week. Nothing seems to be biting, even croaker. Maybe the fish are evacuating ahead of all the storms...

Onancock

Captain Will has not seen much change over the last week. Croaker of all sizes are being caught, though the overall fishing action is slowing down. Mullet, bluefish, and small black sea bass are being caught, and speckled trout are making their way through the area. Striped bass have moved up the creek, and flounder are being caught, though most have to be thrown back.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

Cobb's Marina has seen a couple of citations recently, all caught near the tunnel. Dwayne Olah of Chesapeake landed a 7-pound, 15-ounce flounder. Martin Johnson of Virginia Beach also landed a flounder, weighing in at 10 pounds even. Lee McManus brought in a 4-pound, 3-ounce grey triggerfish.

Staff at Sunset Boating Center gave a croaker citation to an angler earlier in the week, bringing in the catch from the Hampton River. Croaker are also being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Flounder bites are widespread throughout the Hampton Bar and Back River.

The staff at Salt Ponds Marina is seeing a few flounder and a mix of croaker and small spot. Activity has

slowed down over the week.

Staff from York River Fishing Center (formally A&S Feed and Bait Supply) reports excellent puppy drum (juvenile red drum) fishing, as well as spot off the pier. Grey trout are making a showing in the Ware River, while Spanish mackerel are being seen at York Spit.

Kathy from Wallace's Bait and Tackle reports that the cobia are still here in good numbers. Several citations have been issued over last month, ranging from 60 to 80 pounds, with many more in the 30- to 40-pound range. Anglers are out enjoying their fishing, reeling in an assortment of fish. Spot, croaker, puppy drum (juvenile red drum), bluefish, and keeper-sized flounder are popular catches.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Tropical systems are all over the place and the offshore action has really turned on. Dolphin action remains very good. The white marlin bite has busted wide open with boats getting double-digit shots. One boat came in with 20 releases. Good numbers of blue marlin and sailfish are around, making a grand slam a real possibility. Tuna fishing is showing some life also. Bigeyes are being encountered at the Norfolk Canyon. Yellowfin tuna are still not abundant but the ones that are being caught are large, in the 60-80 pound range. Wahoo are showing in greater numbers. Offshore bottom fish are available but with the good pelagic action, few are fishing for them. Cobia are the hot fish in the lower bay and along the coast and you can fish for them however you want. Anglers sitting on chum slicks are catching fish at York Spit and in the Bluefish Rock area. They are being picked off of the buoys and on calm days, schools are being spotted in open water at the mouth of the bay and along the Virginia Beach oceanfront. Doormat flounder continue to be caught by anglers fishing with live bait around structure in the lower bay and at the coastal wrecks. Spanish mackerel are abundant from the Chesapeake Light Tower all the way into York Spit Light. Some crevalle jack and amberjack are around the Chesapeake Light Tower and wrecks like the Ricks and Hanks. Spadefish are available on the coastal wrecks as are some nice triggerfish. A few, large sheepshead are being caught at the CBBT. Good numbers of spot are being caught at Twin Stakes and around Hampton Bar. This looks good for a fall run of jumbo spot this fall. Decent numbers of speckled trout and puppy drum are inside Back River.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

Tropical storm conditions from Hanna are sure to shut down most saltwater activities for a least a few days. But once the waters settle, expect the prelude to the fall fishing trend to be back on track. Most anglers will pursue cobia and flounder. The cobia bite is taking on its typical early fall pattern, with many fish schooling on the surface in lower bay waters and along the formation of the Bay Bridge Tunnel. Both chumming and casting are proving effective for nice fish, with several fish between 60- to 90-pounds hitting the dock. Kayakers are also getting in on the cobia fun as they take nice fish from inshore waters along Sandbridge.

Late season flounder are not disappointing anglers, as fat fish stage in the lower bay for their exit to deeper water. Both drifters and live baiters are finding good success along lower bay channels and over structure. Inshore and offshore wrecks are also providing excellent flatfish action, with fresh

strip baits working well.

Black sea bass are becoming more active on inshore wrecks from the Light Tower Reef to the Triangle wrecks, along with hoards of aggressive triggerfish. Spadefish are also a possibility on the inshore structures.

Croaker are biting all over the lower bay. Many boats are also sitting on decent schools right off Cape Henry. The concrete ships, the 4th island, and the High Rise section of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel are giving up nice hardheads, with some fish pushing 2 pounds. The croaker action off Oyster is decent this week, but the blow this weekend may finish that trend for good. Spot are gaining more attention with good hauls coming from the lower bay inlets, Willoughby Bay, and the lower bay fishing piers. One angler caught 168 keeper spot this week from the Lynnhaven Fishing Pier. Bloodworms and Fishbites are the top bait.

Sheepshead hunters are still crying the blues as these fish continue to elude most anglers, while triggerfish are still active in all the same locations, presenting an easy target.

The king mackerel action slowed this week, while the Spanish mackerel game is still on. Kings are a possibility from Cape Henry to False Cape, and around coastal wrecks while nice Spanish in the 20-inch range are swarming around the Chesapeake Light Tower, the CB line, and along inshore waters. Small Clark and Drone spoons trolled at a fast clip will provide great Spanish action, especially for kids. False albacore are also showing themselves in these same areas under working birds, while bailer mahi are also presenting in cleaner inshore and offshore waters, especially near the wrecks.

The Chesapeake Light Tower can offer a chance at an amberjack, jack cravelle, and a big barracuda. The southern towers and coastal wrecks are also still holding schools of amberjack.

Billfish action is at its peak right now, with some boats releasing a dozen or more whites in a day. The *Sea Wolf* out of Rudee Inlet flew twenty flags this week. The best marlin bite lately is north of the Canyon. Wahoo are prowling mostly inshore of the Canyon and near the Cigar. Dolphin are scattered about, with several citation fish in the mix. Yellowfin tuna are scarce, but some fish are raging up to 80 pounds if you can find them.

Virginia Middle Bay

Jett's Marina reports that the Spanish mackerel fishing is still going strong and their usual bluefish accompaniment is getting larger in size and number. There is still some croaker to be caught on the eastern side of the shipping channel and the spot fishing continues to be excellent, although the much sought after yellowbellies have not shown up yet. People are finding non-slot sized puppy drum in the creeks and backwaters.

Smith's Point Marina reports good fishing for Spanish mackerel as well, and the bluefish are schooling up nicely which makes them that much easier to find and catch. Flounder continue to be caught around the jetties while the croaker fishing has slowed down precipitously. Stripers are starting to show up on peoples lines as well as they start to move down from the north. However, the season does not start until October 4th, so unfortunately you will have to throw them back for the next few weeks.

Capt. Jim reports that for last week most everyone caught a nice mess of fish. The fish are in their “catch me if you can mode”, that is the bottom fish. Once the bluefish move in, however, the bottom fish hunker down or leave the area. The Spanish mackerel are all over Windmill Bar and run north to Fleets Bay and south to almost Wolf Trap. The Cell did not produce much in the way of flounder, cobia, or bottom fish like croaker. The Ranger Light area produced only small croaker and a few spot. In the Rappahannock there were a lot of nice flounder caught at the bridge on an east to west drift, some 24 inches in length. White Stone produced some big spot and so did Butler Hole; they were the biggest he has seen this year. Spot fishing came in spurts; if you left too soon you missed them, and if you stayed too long past the tide changes you lost them. Croaker are still in the catches, as well as nice sized sea mullet. The Spike did not produce again last week but it will soon. The fishing in the Piankatank was fair around Cherry Point for spot. In the bay, off Gwynn’s Island, it was good for spot, croaker, and mullet but again you had to move with the fish or drift.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen’s Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Spanish mackerel are still available along the drop off at Windmill Bar, near R2 and off the Milford Haven #3 day marker. This has been a good year for large Spanish mackerel with most boated measuring about 20 inches or larger. Lots of bluefish are in the same areas. Although many are small, some of them are 2-3 pounds. Good size spot continue to be caught at Cherry Point, off Gwynn Island in 25-30 feet of water, at the Spike (#3 Rappahannock marker), and at Butlers Hole. White perch, a few grey trout, and small croaker are mixed in. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) can be caught in the creeks and from docks. Try to fish grassy areas or shoreline where there is a shell bottom. Manmade oyster reefs will also produce now as will 2-3 feet deep water at the base of rip-rap. I caught a couple of 14-inch croaker from my dock this weekend casting squid on a jig in shallow water for specks and puppy drum. Speckled trout are being caught on peelers and on lures. No citations this week but fair action as the fall run approaches. Flounder fishing has been slow this week.

Virginia Beach

The Virginia Beach Fishing Center is seeing good catches of spot in the inlet, along with flounder, though too small to keep. The headboats are having success with croaker, black seabass, and keeper-sized flounder. In the offshore scene, the dolphin action is smoking! Anglers are reeling them in left and right. A few marlin are being caught, and tuna has been sighted, though they are avoiding the bait. At Sandbridge, shark are being caught, including sandbar and blacktips.

Virginia Piers

The Lynnhaven Fishing Pier is seeing a slow down in the activity. Those anglers out to fish are having luck with spot, croaker, and even a few keeper-sized flounder.

The Virginia Beach Pier has been fighting off surfers who are out to catch some waves from all the tropical systems. Anglers out for fishing have had great luck with spot, roundhead, and puppy drum (juvenile red drum). Pompano and shark are also being reeled in. Maybe those sharks will scare off the surfers.

Staff at the Ocean View Pier is seeing catches of flounder, though they don't measure up to the minimum length requirements. Small black sea bass and puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are also biting, along with bluefish.

Outer Banks, NC

First Fay and now Hanna threaten to put a damper on the upcoming week of fishing. If the inclement weather can avoid us, then anglers can expect continued good fishing, wherever they plan to ply the waters.

Offshore fishing, out of the Nags Head area, continues to be strong with good catches of dolphin, amberjack, wahoo, and billfishes up in the water column. Bottom fishermen have been reeling in tilefish, snappers, and groupers. In the mid-range offshore areas large striped bass have shown up once again, along with red drum, triggerfish, and black sea bass. People fishing close to shore, and from the piers and beaches, have seen the Spanish mackerel and bluefish bite slow down some; and so has the spot, croaker, and spadefish bites. People fishing in the sounds and inlets have been catching large flounder, with one out of every two fish being a keeper. The shallower water of Oregon Inlet has been the hot spot for people drifting cut bait. There were reports of citation-sized croaker and spotted seatrout around the Washington Baum Bridge and striped bass at Mann's Harbor.

South of Oregon Inlet the surf fishing has been improving since the wind switched back to the southeast. Spanish mackerel and bluefish were hitting metal at the Point. Sea mullet and spot have been in the surf, up and down the beaches, and puppy drum were working in the hook. Later in the period, as the wind switched to the northeast, small king mackerel were also being landed by those throwing spoons for Spanish mackerel. Puppy drum were also being picked up by fishing cut bait in the white water.

Fishing out of Hatteras Inlet had good success rates on dolphin offshore as well as good numbers of wahoo and a few king mackerel thrown in too. Offshore bottom fishing produced black sea bass and triggerfish. Inshore flounder, bluefish, and grey trout were being caught.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's [THE SALTWATER REVIEW](http://mrc.virginia.gov/swr/saltwaterreview.shtm) as the source of the fishing information.

Get Hooked!

Report at

www.vasaltwaterjournal.com

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com.

A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's Recreational Fishing Online Reporting website. The page has a blue header with the text 'Virginia Marine Resources Commission Recreational Fishing Online Reporting' and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission logo. Below the header, there is a section titled 'Recreational Saltwater Fishing' with a 'Welcome Jgrist,' message. To the left of this section is a large graphic of a fish skeleton with the text 'Virginia Recreational ASSESSMENT PROGRAM' and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission logo. Below this graphic is a box with the date 'June 16, 2008' and statistics: 'Members: 1,457', 'Trips: 295', and 'Catches: 3,941'. To the right of the 'Welcome Jgrist,' message is a box titled 'Red Drum Reports are Needed!' with text about collecting length data from red drum. Below this is another box titled 'New 2008 Tautog Regs' with a table of regulations.

Closed Season	May 1 through June 24
Minimum Size Limit	14 inches
Possession Limit	4 per person

ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!












THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

***WANTS YOUR FISH....
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

You catch it, you fillet it,

**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.**

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA		RED DRUM	
SHEEPSHEAD		BLACK DRUM	
SPADEFISH		TAUTOG	
TILEFISH		GROUPE	
KING MACKEREL		SPANISH MACKEREL	
BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)			

**In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a
ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT, FOR EACH PARTICIPANT,
PER MONTH of the DONATION.**

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

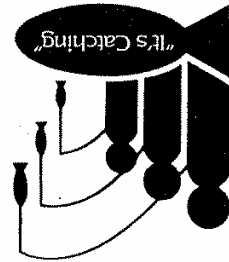
**Bell Isle Marine (Hampton) Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)
Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach) Wachapreague Marina
Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)**

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